

IBN MAḌĀ'S CRITICISM OF ARABIC GRAMMARIANS

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Methodological Premises of Ibn Maḍā'

Retrospecting the history of the Arabic grammar, Ibn Maḍā' says:

Verily the grammarians (God's mercy be upon them!), as I see, laid down the principle of grammar in order to protect the Arabic language from corruption and also its principle from alteration, and thus they reached the goal and attained what they sought. However, they have adhered to that which is not required of them, and in the process of systematization they have gone too far in their quest. Thus the method of their grammar has become complicated, and its foundation has become weakened, and its argument has become short of convincement.... In its beginning, however, the approach was exempt from the superfluous elements and free from the limitations and the fantasies. So its proof was the most evident among the sciences and its rules were the most acceptable on any trial among the sciences (*ma'ārif*). It included only certainty...." (pp. 80–81).⁽⁵³⁾

This is what Ibn Maḍā' sees in the current grammatical systems and what he

is about to do. These systems have become fused and blended with superfluous, unnecessary, useless elements, and lost their original simplicity and conciseness, and they are now complicated and difficult to understand. To get rid of these "superfluous" elements from the grammar and simplify it — this is the objective of his book, *Kitāb al-Radd 'alā al-Nuḥāt* ("Book of the Refutation of the Grammarians"). He says, "My intention in this book is to remove from the grammar that which the grammarians do not need and to criticize the mistakes which are committed unanimously by them." (p. 85)

Now, what is Ibn Maḍā's idea about the cause of the degeneration of the grammatical theories? This brings us to a more fundamental question: What is his basic attitude towards the grammar or his methodological premise for it? He explains this by quoting a *ḥadīth* which, as he confesses, motivated him to compose the book in question:

To assert an extra meaning (*ziyādah*) in the word of the speakers without any proof (*dalīl*) which justifies it is an obvious mistake. This, however, does not result in any punishment. On the other hand, to do this in the Book of God... and to assert an extra meaning in it without any evidence or proof but to say that what is put in the *naṣb* (accusative) is so only by a governing word in the *naṣb* and that the governing word in the *naṣb* is nothing but either a word which verbally conveys a meaning or a word which is intentionally suppressed and whose meaning resides in the mind, is forbidden (*ḥarām*) to him who knows this. Indeed, the Apostle of God said, "He who says about the Qur'ān by *ra'y* and is even right has already committed a mistake." What is required by this *ḥadīth* is the prohibition (of it). That which is prohibited is inviolable except when a proof shows it. The *ra'y* which is not related to a proof is (prohibited). He also said, "As for him who says about the Qur'ān without knowledge, let him take seat in Hell-fire." This is a harsh threat. That which [the Apostle of] God prohibits with threat is "forbidden." He who supposes an extra thing in the Qur'ān by word or by meaning following a wrong opinion (*ẓann*) is evidently misguided.... (p. 92)

This is the *leit-motif* throughout the book.⁽⁵⁴⁾ In this quotation the degeneration of the grammar is ascribed to the grammarians' application of *ra'y* (technically *qiyās*, or analogy)⁽⁵⁵⁾ to the grammatical theories and to their assertion of the extra meaning in the text without proof (*dalīl*), and this is said to have a grave consequence with reference to Qur'ān-exegesis.

According to Ibn Maḍā', the correct interpretation of the text or speech can be attained only when we approach it without applying *ra'y* or analogy and thus without adding any "extra meaning and word" to it. Though he

does not mention positively and systematically his right method for interpreting the text,⁽⁵⁶⁾ we can surmise what it is from his following passage negating the “government” (*‘amal*) of words:

It is wrong rationally as well as legally (*shar’an*) to assert that the utterances (*alfāz*) bring one another into what they are. An intelligent person would never say so for the reasons which it is tedious to mention in the work whose concern is brevity. But one of them is that the agent (*fā’il*) exists, according to its condition, where its act is done, and that the declension (*‘irāb*) is produced where it is only after disappearance of the regent (*‘āmil*). *Zaid*, therefore, is placed in the *naṣb* (accusative) case after *inna* in our speech: *Inna Zaid^{an}*, only after disappearance of *inna*. (p. 87)

We see from this quotation that the words in a sentence are separated from one another. Neither “government” nor relationship is there among them. Consequently we must try to interpret the sentence word by word without making comparison or analogy.

Problem of Regent and Taqdir

Meaning of Regent and Taqdir: When Ibn Maḍā’ says that the Arabic grammar has become deteriorated and complicated on account of the *ra’y* of the grammarians, what does he mean concretely by *ra’y*? Technically it is the theory of regent (*naẓariyah al-‘āmil*). For this reason, he asserts first of all the abolition of this theory. Now, what is the meaning of the theory of regent?

As is well known, the Arabic grammar (*naḥw*), in its narrow sense, is the systematic theory of explanation for the declension of the case-ending of word.⁽⁵⁷⁾ And the theory of regent is the core of this system — it explains declension (or indeclension) by the concept of “government” (*‘amal*) of word, expressed explicitly or implicitly. Ibn Maḍā’ exposes this as follows:

...the *naṣb*-, *khafḍ*-, and *jazm*-declensions are only due to a verbal regent (*‘āmil lafẓī*) and the *raf’*-declension among them is due to a verbal or implicit regent (*‘āmil ma’nawī*). They (grammarians) explain this with reference to our speech: *Ḍaraba Zaid^{an} ‘Amr^{an}* (Zaid struck ‘Amr) and say that the *raf’*-declension in *Zaid^{an}* and the *naṣb*-declension in *‘Amr^{an}* are produced only by *ḍaraba*. (p. 85)

Thence comes the rule, for example, that every word with *naṣb*-declension must have the word which governs it in that declension (*kull manṣūb fa-lā budda la-hu min-nāṣib*).

These governing words, however, are not always expressed in word (*lafẓ*).

They may be "suppressed" (*maḥdhūb*) or "implicit" (*muḍmar* or *mustatir*). In these cases the grammarians "assume a virtual meaning" (*taqdīr*) and explain away the "exceptions." Thus they keep up the rules of the grammar and the harmony of the language. This is, according to Ibn Maḍā', the very cause of degeneration and complication of the grammatical theories. He proves the falsity of their theory extensively and intensively.

Taqdīr of Suppressed Regents: (a) Suppression of a Known Word. The Arabic grammarians divide the suppressed words (*maḥdhūfāt*) into three parts. One is "the suppression of a word without which the speech is incomplete, but it is suppressed because of the knowledge of the partners of speech (*mukhāṭab*). (p. 88) For example, the word of God, "And it is said unto those who ward off (evil): 'What hath your Lord revealed?' They say: 'Good' (*khair^{an}*)." (16: 30) In this case the words, "Our Lord hath revealed" (*anzala Rabb-nā*) is suppressed, because the addressed persons know it. And when they appear (*zahara*), the speech becomes complete. Rhetorically, however, the suppression is better.

(b) *Suppression of an Unnecessary Word.* In this suppression the speech is complete without the suppressed word; nay, when it appears, the speech becomes defective. The syntactical distraction (*ishtighāl*) belongs to this category. For example, *A Zaid^{an} ḍarabta-hu* (Is it Zaid whom you struck?). In an attempt to explain the *naṣb* (accusative) in *Zaid^{an}*, the grammarians assume virtual suppression (*taqdīr*) of *ḍarabta* between *a* and *Zaid^{an}* as the governing word of *Zaid^{an}*. When the suppressed word appears, therefore, the speech becomes defective like: *A ḍarabta Zaid^{an} ḍarabta-hu*. This kind of awkwardness is produced only by their above-mentioned rule that every word with *naṣb*-declension must have the word which governs it in that declension. And in addition, Ibn Maḍā' shows untenability of the suppression by quoting the following example: *A Zaid^{an} mararta bi-ghulām^t-hi*. (p. 89)

(c) *Suppression of an Implicit Word.* When the suppressed word appears, it changes the modality of the speech. Accordingly it is always implicit (*muḍmar*) and never appears.

For example, *Yā 'Abd^a Allāh^t* (O 'Abd Allāh!). The grammarians assume an implicit verb, *ad'ū* or *unādī* before *'Abd^a Allāh^t*. However, if the suppressed word, *ad'ū* or *unādī* appears, then the vocative changes into an ordinary sentence.

The same applies to "the causative *fā*" (*fā al-sababiyah*). For example, *Mā ta'ti-nā fa-tuḥadditha-nā*. The grammarians imply (*yuqaddirūna*) before *tuḥad-*

ditha-nā a particle *an* which has the same governing force as the verb. Thence *fa-an tuḥadditha-nā*. Furthermore, this *an* is the *an al-maṣḍarīyah*. Thus, what is implied in that example is: *Mā yakūnu min-ka ityān fa-ḥadīth*. And this has two aspects: One is *Mā ta'ti-nā fa-kaifa tuḥaddithu-nā* (You do not come, therefore how do you talk with us?), and the other is *Mā ta'ti-nā muḥaddīth^{an}* (You do not come to us to talk). (pp. 89–91)

All these suppressed words in (b) and (c) are always implicit and never expressed, but their meanings (*ma'ānī*) are in the mind of the speaker. Ibn Maḍā' criticizes this assumption as follows:

These implicit words (*muḍmarāt*) whose appearance is not allowed must belong to either of the two cases, namely, either they are not existent in utterance (*lafẓ*), but their meanings exist in the mind of the speaker, or they do not exist in the mind, like the words whose verbal expressions are non-existent. If these implicit words do not exist in the mind, nor their verbal expressions in the speech, then what is it that produces the *naṣb*-declension? What is it that gives the implicit meaning? It is absolutely impossible to ascribe the “government” (*'amal*) to a non-existent word (*ma'dūm*). If you say: The meanings of these suppressed words exist in the mind of the speaker, and the speech becomes complete with those meanings, and it is part of the speech which resides in the mind and is to be expressed by the words, but whose verbal expressions are suppressed for brevity (*ijāzan*) as the words which are allowed to appear are suppressed for brevity, then it necessarily follows that the speech is defective (*nāqīṣ*), and that it becomes complete only with the implicit words since they are part of the speech. Thus we add to the speech of the speakers that which is not expressed verbally, without any proof (*dalīl*) but their assertion that every word in the *naṣb*-declension must have the verbally expressed governing word in that declension. (p. 91)

According to Ibn Maḍā', if the suppressed words whose appearance is not allowed do not have the meaning in the mind of the speaker, it is a sheer nonsense to assume a “government” in them. On the other hand, if those words have the meaning in the mind of the speaker and the speech must be understood with the help of this meaning which is never expressed verbally, there is something wrong with the speech, namely, it is defective. In reality, however, the speech never needs such an assumption. It is perfectly understandable by itself. Those suppressed words, therefore, are nothing but an unnecessary, extra element.

Do we not see in this argumentation the same attitude that the Zāhirites show in the exegesis of the sacred text; that is, anything necessary is expressed in the text?

Die Zāhirschule kann dieser auf speculativer Willkür beruhenden Erweiterung des geschriebenen Gesetzes ihre Zustimmung nicht geben; wären jene Gattungen gemeint, so hätte der Prophet sicherlich dem kürzeren Ausdruck den Vorzug gebend, statt einzelne Arten zu nennen, bloss den einen Gattungsnamen gebraucht.⁽⁵⁸⁾

Taqdīr of "Suspenders" (Muta'allaqāt): To the same foregoing category belong the implicit words which the grammarians assume in relation to the prepositional phrase, which are either an enunciative (*khabar*), or a relative clause (*ṣilah*), or a qualificative clause (*ṣifah*), or a denotative state (*ḥāl*).

For example, *Zaid^{un} fī al-dār* (Zaid [is] in the house). The grammarians assume an implicit word, *mustaqirr* (remaining) or *qā'im* (staying) upon which *fī al-dār* is suspended. This assumption was simply needed by their rule (*qā'idah*) that if the prepositions in the prepositional phrases are not redundant (*zā'idah*), they must have regents, either explicit or implicit. (p. 99).

According to Ibn Maḍā', there is no need of this kind of implication. We can dispense with it since "all this is a complete speech composed of two nouns which show two meanings and between which is there a relationship. And this relationship is shown by *fī* (in). So we do not need anything other than this." (p. 99)

Taqdīr of *Implicit Pronouns*: (a) *Implicit Pronouns in the Derivatives*. The grammarians assume an implicit pronoun in the derivatives (*mushtaqqāt*) such as the present participle (*ism al-fā'il*), the adjective assimilated to it (*al-mushabbahah bi-hi*) and the past participle (*ism al-maf'ūl*). For example, in the sentence: *Zaid^{un} dārib^{un} 'Amr^{an}* (Zaid is a striker of 'Amr), they assume an implicit pronoun (in this case, *huwa*) in *dārib^{un}*, which indicates the agent (*fā'il*). They quote, in support of their claim, the following examples where the implicit pronoun appears manifest or its existence is apparent:

Zaid^{un} dārib^{un} huwa wa-Bakr^{un} 'Amr^{an}. (Zaid and Bakr are strikers of 'Amr.)
Marartu bi-qawmⁱⁿ 'arabⁱⁿ ajma'ūna. (I passed by a group of Bedouins all of them.)

Ibn Maḍā' criticizes this assumption (*taqdīr*) as follows: There are two elements implied in the present participle, namely, the action and its agent (but without the agent's name specifically indicated). Thus in the example: *Zaid^{un} dārib^{un} 'Amr^{an}*, the participle *dārib^{un}* indicates the agent of *darb* (striking), whose name is not shown by *dārib* itself, but *Zaid^{un}*. Why then, such an additional as an implicit pronoun?

As for the case of conjunction (*Zaid^{un} ḡārib^{un} huwa wa-Bakr^{un} ‘Amr^{an}*), it is certainly admitted, as the grammarians assume, that the manifest pronoun (*bāriẓ*) is a corroboration of the implicit pronoun which is not expressed verbally, but how is it possible to extend this specific case of conjunction to all other cases where the pronoun is not implied by the speaker himself? The same is true with the other example. That is to say, the expression *ajma’ūna* is exceptional. It is certainly admitted that the word *ajma’ūna* is a corroboration of the implicit pronoun in ‘*arabⁱⁿ*, but why is it necessary to generalize these exceptional few cases and assume an implicit pronoun in all cases?

(b) *Implicit Pronouns in the Verbs.* In like manner the grammarians suppose an implicit pronoun in the verb as its agent, say, in *qāma*, when we say, *Zaid^{un} qāma* (Zaid stood up). Because of their rule that “the agent does not come before the verb and that the verb must have the agent” (p. 103),⁽⁵⁹⁾ they cannot take this *Zaid^{un}* as the agent of *qāma*. Thus they assume a pronoun in the verb.

According to Ibn Maḡā’, however, we do not need this sort of assumption of a pronoun (*ḡamīr*), since “the verb itself shows the pronoun as well as the tense by its form (*bi-lafẓ-hi*).” (p. 105) For example, from *yā* in *ya’lamu* we know it is the third pers. masc. sing.; from *tā* in *ta’lamu* it is known to be the second pers. masc. sing. or the third pers. femi. sing.; from ‘*alima* it is known to be the third pers. masc. sing. in the finished form, and so on. As for the rules for the feminization (*ta’nīth*) and the pluralization (*jam’*) of the verb when it comes before the agent, he agrees with the grammarians.

“Conflict” and “Syntactical Distraction”

“*Conflict*”: The “conflict” (*tanāẓu’*) is the section (*bāb*) concerning the two agents and the two objects. (pp. 107–17) According to the grammarians, two regents cannot govern one single regiment (*ma’mūl*). Therefore, one of the two regents must be chosen and the agent is assumed in the other regent. Ibn Maḡā’ does not oppose this rule basically (in that case he uses the word *ta’liq* rather than ‘*amal*). However, when the grammairans apply the theory of regent here and coin the artificial expressions by analogy (*qiyās*) which are not used by the Arabs in reality and go even so far as to reject the speech of the Arabs which does not fit in their rules, he raises an objection and criticizes them. He shows this in two examples: the verb *ẓanna*, which takes two objects and the verb ‘*lama*, which takes three objects.

Example 1:

In the singular,

Zanantu wa-zanna-nī Zaid^{un} shākhiṣ^{an}. (I thought Zaid, and he thought me, going out.)

Zanantu wa-zanna-nī-hi Zaid^{an} shākhiṣ^{an}.

In the dual,

Zanantu wa-zannā-nī shākhiṣ^{an} al-Zaidain shākhiṣain.

In the plural,

Zanantu wa-zannū-nī shākhiṣ^{an} al-Zaidīna shākhiṣīna.

Example 2:

In the singular,

A'lamtu wa-a'lama-nī Zaid^{un} 'Amr^{an} munṭalaq^{an}. (Zaid told me, and I told him, that 'Amr was set free.)

A'lamtu wa-a'lama-nī-hi iyā-hu Zaid^{an} 'Amr^{an} munṭalaq^{an}.

In the dual,

A'lamtu wa-a'lamā-nī-himā iyā-humā al-Zaidain al-'Amrain munṭalaqain.

In the plural,

A'lamtu wa-a'lamū-nī-him iyā-hum al-Zaidīna al-'Amrīna munṭalaqīna.

Virtually,

A'lamtu al-Zaidīna al-'Amrīna munṭalaqīna wa-a'lamū-nī-him iyā-hum.

Ibn Maḏā' asks: Do the Arabs speak such complicated sentences at all? In fact, we find this kind of expressions only in the textbooks of the grammarians. We must, therefore, strictly refrain from applying the rules induced from the verbs which take only one object to the verbs requiring two or more objects, by analogy "until it is heard from the Arabs." (p. 121) This is his fundamental attitude.

"*Syntactical Distraction*" (Ishtighāl): This is the section concerning "the distraction of the verb from the object by its pronoun" (p. 118) or the noun annexed to its pronoun. For example, *Zaid^{an} qarabtu-hu*. This section is very difficult and complicated to understand, since it is deeply related to the theory of regent. The grammarians fervently debated with reference to many complicated examples.

We have already mentioned Ibn Maḏā's criticism of one aspect of this theory in reference to "suppression." Here he argues another aspect of it quoting three famous examples:

A Zaid^{an} lam yaḏrib-hu illā-huwa. (quoted by Akhfash).

Akhawā-ka zannā-humā munṭalaqain. (quoted by Akhfash).

A anta 'Abd^u Allāh' darabta-hu. (quoted by Sībawaihi).

And he criticizes as follows:

To occupy oneself with these problems — which are imagined and not actually used, nor needed — is useless for him who intends to investigate that of which necessity is felt. To remove these and the like from the science of grammar is to investigate and simplify it. Thus it is more deserving to dive into the problems like these which are useful to speech than to occupy oneself with that which is of no use to speech like their argument: By what is the object placed in the *naṣb* (accusative), the agent or the verb, or both? (p. 127)

On the other hand, Ibn Maḍā' proposes his own simple rule: If the noun placed first is referred by the pronoun annexed to the verb in the *raf'* (nominative), the noun is placed in the nominative since its pronoun is in the position of the nominative. (Ex. *A Zaid^{un} qāma.*) Otherwise, it is placed in the *naṣb* (accusative), when it is in the position of the accusative. As for the rest, we have only to "follow the speech of the Arabs." (p. 121).

Abolition of the Theory of Regent: Ibn Maḍā' attacks the theory of regent further in relation to the more fundamental grammatical problem. He criticizes the idea of regent itself. Quoting the words of Ibn Jinnī, he says as follows:

Concluding the discussion in his *al-Khaṣā'iṣ*, on the verbal regents (*al-'awāmil al-lafẓīyah*) and the implicit regents (*al-'awāmil al-ma'nawīyah*), Abū al-Faṭḥ [Ibn Jinnī] says: As for the reality and the conclusion of the discourse, it is that the "government" in the *raf'*-, *naṣb*-, *jarr*-, and *jazm*-declensions belongs to the speaker (*mutakallim*) himself, not to any other thing. He emphasized "the speaker" by the word "himself" (*naḥs*) in order to elevate the probability. Then he adds a stress further with his words "not to any other thing" (*lā li-shay ghair-hi*). This is the doctrine of the Mu'tazilites. As for the tenet of the People of Truth, these sounds (*aṣwāt*) are only from the Act of God. They are related to man exactly in the same way as the rest of his volitional acts (*af'āl-hu al-ikhtiyārīyah*) are. (p. 87)

He is not arguing out of spite. He is simply stressing the inviolability of the grammatical materials or the reality of speech. Its phonetic and syntactical modality is a given thing (by God, according to Ibn Maḍā'). It is never to be arbitrarily ascribed to the speaker himself, or more specifically the "government" assumed by the grammarians. According to Ibn Maḍā', as we have seen before (*supra*, pp. 99–100), it is impossible from the very beginning to imagine the "government" between two words, since one word comes only after the disappearance of the other.

Furthermore, the grammarians are self-contradictory in their assertion: "Every word in the accusative must have the verbal governing word. On the other hand, these suppressed words whose appearance is not allowed must not exist in utterance and will, and nevertheless the speech is perfect without them." (p. 98) If one argues against Ibn Maḏā' by saying that the theory of regent is an artificial device for understanding, like, say, the point and line supposed by the geometricians, which are actually bodies, he answers, "The geometrical point and line are a help to understanding of the reality for the student. There is nothing like this, however, in the supposition of these regents except conjecture and fantasy." (p. 98) In short, this theory is unnecessary. "This is concerning the speech of man. As for the Speech of God, however, it is forbidden (*ḥarām*)." (p. 104, 141) If the grammar requires universality as a science, naturally it is also applied to the text of the Qur'ān, the direct Speech of God. At this point, the grammar is involved inseparably in theology.⁽⁶⁰⁾ Here we see the necessity of Ibn Maḏā's criticism of the grammatical theories as a Zāhirite.

Problem of *Qiyās*

Meaning of Qiyās: When Ibn Maḏā' asserts the abolition of *qiyās*, what does he mean by *qiyās*? To be sure, the grammar in general as a science is based on *qiyās* in its broadest sense of "analogy" or "comparison," not to speak of the theory of regent and the implicit assumption (*taqḏīr*). (The theory of regent is ultimately based on *qiyās*.) And certainly he does not deny *qiyās* in general. But he simply intends to reject its abuses committed by the grammarians.

The *qiyās*, as he sees it, consists in attributing the motivation to something else (*ta'līl*). And in case of attribution, the same motivation (*'illah*) in the principal judgement (*aṣl*) must be in the subsidiary judgement (*far'*). (p. 157) The grammarians, however, are wrong in applying *qiyās*. They compare the noun to the verb in "government," and the particle *inna* and its cognates to the transitive verb (*al-af'āl al-muta'addiyah*) in "government" and so on. (p. 157)⁽⁶¹⁾ Ibn Maḏā' takes up two topics: the second and the third motivations (*al-'ilal al-thawānī wa-al-thawālith*) and the (grammatical) exercise (*tamrīn*).

The Second and the Third Motivations: Example: *Qama Zaid^{un}*. Concerning *Zaid^{un}*, if one is asked, "Why is it put in the nominative?" he will answer, "Because *Zaid^{un}* is the agent. All the agents are put in the nominative." (p. 151)

One may be further asked, "Why is the agent put in the nominative?" This is the second motivation. To this question one can, and should, simply answer, "So speak the Arabs. That is established by induction from the speech which is spoken customarily (*al-kalām al-mutawātir*)."

(p. 151) It is a reality. There is no need, nor use of further investigation. No answer is required for this kind of question just as the jurists are not required to answer the question about the motivation of the text (*naṣṣ*).

The grammarians do, however. They answer: In order to distinguish the agent from the object. And they go further and ask: Why is the judgement not reversed in favor of the accusative for the agent and the nominative for the object? — This is the third motivation. And they give the answer to this question!: Because the agents are few for the reason that the verb has only one agent, while the objects are many. Therefore, the heaviest, namely, the *raf'*-declension, is given to the agent, while the lightest, namely, the *naṣb*-declension, is given to the object. Consequently, the few, but heavy agents and the many, but light objects are kept in balance. We see in this way of thinking the grammarians' philosophy of harmony (*supra*, pp. 89–90).

According to Ibn Maḍā', the philosophical inquiry such as this is of no use and does not help us understand the text itself. On the contrary, it simply makes the grammar more and more difficult.

It does not increase our knowledge about the fact that the agent is put in the nominative. Even if we did not know it, that ignorance would not do us any harm, since it is an established rule that the agent is put in the nominative. And this is what we attain by investigating the authentic material which comes to our knowledge. (p. 152)

The grammarians should be content with the first motivation and be concerned with accumulating the rules such as the nominative case for the agent (*raf' al-fā'il*), instead of occupying themselves with philosophical speculation.

"Exercise": Ibn Maḍā' discusses another example of the abuses of *qiyās*, namely, grammatical exercise (*tamrīn*). Example: Make the pattern *fu'l* out of *bai'*. (p. 161) To this question, one answers *bū'*. And he explains: Its original form is *buy'*, but has substituted the *wāw* for this *yā* on account of the *ḍammah* of the previous letter, since it is difficult (*thaqīl*) to pronounce *buy'* as it is. In this case, he is based on the analogy (*qiyās*) of the speech of the Arabs, namely, *mūqin* and *mūsir* (instead of *muyqin* and *muysir*, the present participles of the fourth derived form, *ayqana* and *aysara* respectively). When the motive (*'illah*) disappears, however, they take the regular formation. Thus, the plural

of *mūsir* is *mayāsir*, and its diminutive (*taṣghīr*) is *muyaisir*.

Another answer to the above question is *bī'* deduced on the analogy of *bīd*, 'in and *ghīd* in the speech of the Arabs (p. 162) (the plural forms of *baiḍā'*, 'ainā' and *ghaidā'* respectively). Their original forms are *buyd*, 'uyn and *ghuyd* respectively, following the general pattern *fu'l* as the plural form of *fa'lā*. The substitution of the *wāws* for the *yās*, however, is abandoned in favor of the *kasrah* on the first letters of these words.

And both sides argue in support of their own assertions, based further on the analogy of some other words. For example, the former vindicate their position by saying "that *bū'* is singular and to follow the pattern of *mūsir* and the like is better than to follow the pattern of the plural." (p. 162) The latter, on the other hand, support their views by saying that "to substitute the *kasrah* for the *ḍammah* in favor of the *yā* is lighter (*akhaḥf*) and it is better than to change the *yā* for the *wāw*, since the *yā* is lighter and it is more frequently used than the *wāw*." (p. 163)

What does this sort of argumentation mean to Ibn Maḍā'? It is already obvious to us now. He says:

This is only one topic. How about more of the same kind? The argument about it is lengthened and the table of speech concerning it is extended with no profit from it and no need of it. People cannot learn the genuine, pure language. How much less this unnecessary, speculated argument! (p. 164)

New Grammar: As we have seen in the foregoing, Ibn Maḍā' himself has never constructed a new grammatical system. For it to be done, the old edifice must, first of all, be smashed and destroyed. And Ibn Maḍā' undertook this task. He dealt a heavy blow on the current grammatical theories. From his attack and argumentation, however, we can readily know the course which the systematization of a new grammar would take in the future.

First of all, the new grammar must be simple and plain. Secondly, in close relation to the first, it must be such that it will respect the reality of speech and convey the meaning "faithful" to the text. The speech or the text comes first, and then the rules (not *vice versa*!). The reality of speech must be respected to the highest possible extent. For this purpose, anything which impairs the linguistic reality by introducing an extra meaning in it must be strictly shunned.

In this perspective, the theory of regent (*nazariyah al-'āmil*) and "virtual assumption" (*taqdīr*) must be discarded. In fact, it is not the "government"

(‘*amal*) nor the “regent” (‘*āmil*) that changes the case-ending of word. The linguistic modalities are given things to be used by the speaker to express his intention. Efforts must be made to understand this intention of the speaker, not the “government.” We must be strict in applying *qiyās* so that we may not draw a conclusion which is not used at all. We should refrain from indulging in the second and the third motive-seeking. We must stop assimilating, for example, the verb to the noun in declension by wrong analogy. Both have different realities with different modes (*ṣuwar*) and, therefore, under different rules. What we have to do is to collect as many modes of each section (*bāb*) as possible and to induce rules from them, without indulging in idle speculation. And in this case, the actual speech or text must be, first of all, taken into consideration. By accumulating the rules gained in this way we can construct a new system of grammar.

- (53) The pagination in the bracket shows that of Ibn Maḍā's *Kitāb al-radd 'alā al-nuḥāt*.
- (54) He repeats similar expressions throughout the book (Cf. p. 80, 82, 106, 141, etc.).
- (55) See *infra*, pp. 107–108.
- (56) As far as I know, interestingly enough, Ibn Maḍā' has never used the word “*zāhir*” in his book in question.
- (57) See the definition given by Farḥāt in his *Baḥth al-maṭālib*, pp. 134–35.
- (58) I. Goldziher, *Die Zāhiriten*, p. 42.
- (59) According to the footnote by the editor (Shawqī Ḍaif), this rule is asserted only by the Basran school.
- (60) For this interesting topic of the relationship between the Zāhirite philosophy of language and theology, see R. Arnaldez, *Grammaire et théologie*.
- (61) Ibn Maḍā' does not dwell upon this point. Al-Sīrāfī mentions five “similarities”: (1) Both by nature have the general meaning and are specified by adding letters. Example: *sa-yaqūmu* and *al-rajl*. (2) Both can be suffixed by *lām al-ibtidā'*. (3) As the unfinished verb has two tenses, i. e., the present and the future, so the noun has two meanings. Example: '*ain*, meaning “eye” and “fountain.” (4) Both can be attached to a noun as the concomitant state. Example: *Marartu bi-Zaidⁱⁿ yaḍribu* or *ḍārib^{un}*. (5) The unfinished verb and the noun in the form of *fā'il* have the same order of vocalization *a — i* in *yaḍribu* and *ḍārib* (Quoted from G. Weil, “Zum Verständnis,” p. 390).